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TOT: 240506Z DEC 88

TO: ~~TIME~~ ROUTINE MEA BRIEF.

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST BRIEF FOR 24 DECEMBER 1988.

FROM: DDI/O/CPAS.

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5. IN BRIEF

1. CHINA-INDIA: GANDHI'S VISIT APPEARS SUCCESSFUL

INDIAN PRIME MINISTER GANDHI'S VISIT TO CHINA APPEARS TO HAVE PRODUCED MOVEMENT TOWARD RESOLUTION OF THE LONGSTANDING BORDER DISPUTE AND LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS. ~~REDACTED~~ 63

IN A JOINT COMMUNIQUE RELEASED YESTERDAY, THE TWO SIDES ANNOUNCED ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP ON THE BOUNDARY QUESTION AND THE FORMATION OF JOINT COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND TRADE AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. THE TEXT ALSO TOOK NOTE OF INDIA'S RECOGNITION OF CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY OVER TIBET AND STRESSED THAT IMPROVED RELATIONS NEED NOT WAIT FOR A BORDER SETTLEMENT. CHINESE

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PREMIER LI PENG ACCEPTED GANDHI'S INVITATION TO VISIT NEW DELHI, ALTHOUGH NO DATE HAS BEEN SET.

THE FORMATION OF A BORDER WORKING GROUP AND UPBEAT PRESS COVERAGE OF THE VISIT INDICATE BOTH SIDES ARE PLEASED WITH THE DISCUSSIONS. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO INFORMATION ON THE SPECIFICS OF THE BORDER TALKS, THE WORKING GROUP WILL ADD IMPETUS TO BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH HAVE NOT PROGRESSED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING EIGHT ROUNDS OF WORKING-LEVEL TALKS SINCE 1981.

THE APPARENT AGREEMENT TO RESOLVE THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE IN FURTHER MEETINGS WILL HELP GANDHI SILENCE DOMESTIC CRITICS WHO WILL CLAIM THAT HIS VISIT RESULTED ONLY IN SYMBOLIC AGREEMENTS AND THAT HE FAILED TO MAKE PROGRESS ON THE KEY ISSUE. BEIJING IS ALMOST CERTAINLY PLEASED BY NEW DELHI'S PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER TIBET, PARTICULARLY AFTER INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF CHINESE POLICE SHOOTINGS OF TIBETAN DEMONSTRATORS EARLIER THIS MONTH.

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### 3. LEBANON: PLO-AMAL MILITIA REACH TRUCE

THE SHIA AMAL MILITIA IS MENDING RELATIONS WITH PRO-ARAFAT PLO FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WHILE IT PREPARES FOR A NEW ROUND OF BATTLES WITH HIZBALLAH IN WEST BEIRUT AND THE CAPITAL'S SOUTHERN SUBURBS.

AMAL PROBABLY RECOGNIZES IT CANNOT COUNT ON ACTIVE SYRIAN SUPPORT AGAINST HIZBALLAH. THE MODERATE SHIA MILITIA NO DOUBT HOPES THAT REPAIRING RELATIONS WITH FATAH WILL AT LEAST NEUTRALIZE THE PALESTINIANS, WHO HAVE BACKED HIZBALLAH IN PAST INTER-SHIA CONFRONTATIONS. THE ACCORD ALSO FACILITATES AMAL MEMBERS' MOVEMENTS BETWEEN BEIRUT AND THE SOUTH THROUGH FATAH'S SIDON STRONGHOLD. PRO-ARAFAT PLO FORCES APPEAR TO BE TILTING TOWARD AMAL IN ANTICIPATION OF ROCKY RELATIONS WITH HIZBALLAH AND SYRIA FOLLOWING LAST MONTH'S PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING AND THE PLO DIALOGUE WITH WASHINGTON.

### 4. AFGHANISTAN: UN TO REDUCE PRESENCE IN KABUL

UN PERSONNEL, OTHER THAN THOSE MONITORING THE SOVIET

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WITHDRAWAL, WILL BE REDUCED FROM ABOUT 35 TO SIX OR SEVEN BY LATE NEXT MONTH. UN RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE ENGLUND HAS ALREADY LEFT KABUL AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN. THE UN OFFICE HAS INFORMED THE AFGHAN REGIME OF THE DECISION, CLAIMING NONETHELESS THAT CURRENT UN PROJECTS, INCLUDING UNICEF AND REFUGEE AID PROGRAMS, WILL PROCEED DURING THE DRAWDOWN, WHICH WILL TAKE AT LEAST TWO MONTHS.

THE KABUL REGIME AND THE SOVIETS HAD TRIED TO USE THE UN PRESENCE, WHICH GREW EARLIER THIS YEAR WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW AID PROGRAMS, AS EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. THE DRAWDOWN IS ALMOST CERTAINLY PROMPTED BY EXPECTATIONS THE REGIME WILL COLLAPSE AFTER THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL, AS WELL AS BY CONCERNS THAT SOVIET AERIAL BOMBING MIGHT PROMPT NEW ROCKET ATTACKS ON KABUL BY THE RESISTANCE. THE UN STAFF REDUCTIONS WILL FURTHER HURT MORALE IN THE CAPITAL, PARTICULARLY IF THERE IS ALSO A DRAWDOWN IN AID SERVICES AND OTHER PERSONNEL CUTBACKS OR EMBASSY CLOSURES.

5. IN BRIEF

USSR

SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO KABUL VORONTSOV TO MEET FORMER AFGHAN KING ZAHIR IN ROME THIS WEEKEND . . . STILL TRYING TO PUSH RESISTANCE ALLIANCE INTO SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS ON INTERIM GOVERNMENT . . . NO TALKS WITH IRANIAN-BASED AFGHAN REBELS YET.

SOUTH ASIA

THREE EXPLOSIONS NEAR UK EMBASSY TUESDAY. SOURCE OF EXPLOSIONS UNKNOWN. FIRST ROCKET ATTACK IN KABUL THIS MONTH.

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